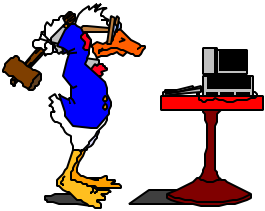


# MEDICAID NEWS

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## The Millennium Bug

**Unlike most projects this one has immovable deadlines. You cannot miss the December 31, 1999 deadline. It will NOT be postponed.**

### What is Y2K or the Millennium Bug?

When you hear someone talk about "Y2K" or the "Millennium Bug," they are referring to the year 2000.

### What is the big issue about the year 2000?

Almost all computer-based systems will be at risk of being adversely affected by the arrival of the Year 2000 (01/01/2000). As a health care practitioner or institution, you need to be aware of how the year 2000 affects you and your patients.

Computers have been programmed to store the date in the following format dd/mm/yy. This means that only two digits are allowed for the day (dd), month (mm) and year (yy). Can you see the problem? When computers first entered the business world in the late '60s and the early '70s, they were very expensive. This 'expense' was tied directly to two aspects of computing, how much data could the computer store and how fast could it process that data. Even tiny incremental changes resulted in huge cost increases.

One way to store data was on a Hollerith card. Each of these cards had enough space to hold only 80 characters of information. Since 80 characters is not very much, they only used the characters that they had to. Therefore, they compromised the date and wrote 230155

instead of 23/01/1955, saving themselves 4 precious characters, two of which were the crucial '19'.

Patient care services, systems, and devices that rely on dates, the age of the patient, and other calculations could be severely affected if corrections are not made in time.

Every business and organization that relies on computer systems or devices must address the year 2000 issue.

### What should we do to begin planning for the year 2000?

Appoint someone as responsible for making sure your facility is year 2000 compliant.

Become aware of how the year 2000 can affect your systems. Anything that depends on a microchip or data entry could be affected.

Perform a Y2K Strategic Assessment to uncover year 2000 vulnerable areas. This review should include not only day-to-day operations, but also key suppliers, business, and data partners. List everything and identify your mission critical items, namely, those you cannot do without.

Begin to create a project plan. Decide which applications must be changed. When they must be ready. How many people you will

need at each phase of the project. What your critical deadlines are and what you will do if you begin to miss your deadlines.

Take a look at what tools and services are being offered by the Year 2000 conversion marketplace. There are some extremely clever tools that can actually change, maybe not all, but some of your code automatically.

Finally, create a contingency plan.

### **Do we need a contingency plan?**

Creating a Year 2000 Contingency Plan is not giving up on fixing your systems; it is just good business. No matter how early you started, everything that impacts you can not be guaranteed to be compliant. A contingency plan could save you from disaster.

### **What should we include in our contingency plan?**

Each provider needs to determine the extent to which issues apply to his facility. However, as a guide, your contingency plan could include:

- ◆ The impact on your facility as a result of failures with your interdependencies.
- ◆ Systems and programs that are identified as most critical and most at risk.
- ◆ Compliance deadline. In general, systems should be repaired/replaced three months before their individual failure horizon.
- ◆ A disaster-recovery plan for each system.
- ◆ A list of systems that can be repaired as compared to those that are not likely to be mitigated.
- ◆ A strategy for dealing with the moral and legal obligations to warn consumers about potential consequences of a computer failure or disruption.

- ◆ Recommendation on how to inform people about the potential problem and its effects.
- ◆ A list of all critical contacts as well as all suppliers or customers.

### **How far along is Medicaid?**

All of Medicaid's programs are remediated and tested. In addition, the Medicaid Program can receive both two and/or four digit dates.

A contingency plan is currently being drafted, and has an anticipated release date of July 1, 1999.

The concept of Medicaid's contingency is based on the failure of other resources necessary to conduct the essential function of our office. The plan is not an alternative to system compliance. It is to develop alternative processes that allow for ongoing operation of critical business functions.

The contingency plan will be invoked if and when the South Dakota Medicaid program begins to experience system failures. The authority to invoke the Contingency Plan will be at the discretion of the Administrator, or in his absence the Assistant Administrator upon notification by the Bureau of Information and Telecommunications of a disruption expected to last over two weeks.

**T**hank you for taking the time to read Medicaid News. We are confident that you will do all you can to prepare for the new millennium, including having a contingency plan in place to address potential problems that may arise despite your best efforts to prepare.

After all, our recipients are counting on us to ensure their safety and the continued delivery of services.